

Federal Application Tips

For more than fifty years, the U.S. Government required applicants to submit a Standard Form 171, Application for Federal Employment. In 1995, however, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) adopted new guidelines and issued the new Optional Application for Federal Employment (OF-612). As a result, vacancy announcements issued today by the DOS carry this statement:

"You may apply for advertised vacancies with a resume, the Optional Application for Federal Employment (OF-612), or any other written format you choose."

In practical terms this means that you may continue to submit a SF-171, an OF-612 or a "Federal" resume.

The purpose of all three options is the same:

- To get you judged "qualified" for the vacancy
- To get you certified as eligible
- To get you "best qualified"
- To get you selected for an interview and/or selected for the job
- To impress the reader with the contents, the look of the document and your organizational skills
- To serve as a "marketing" tool

Federal Resumes

In its publication, Applying for a Federal Job (OF-510), the United States Office of Personnel Management States that "You may apply for advertised vacancies with a resume, the Optional Application for Federal Employment (OF-612), or any other written format you choose." If you choose to prepare and submit a resume, you should be aware that while you may design your own format, you must include certain information so that your qualifications may be evaluated to determine if you meet legal requirements for Federal employment. If your resume does not provide all the information requested, you may lose consideration for the job.

The need to provide all of the detailed information that OPM requires means that your Federal Resume may be longer than a typical private-sector resume. If you wish to apply for non-government jobs, you'll need to develop a different resume to meet that need.

Use the freedom you have been given to create a format that allows the reader easy access to all your strengths. Add as many experience blocks as you need

to describe the work experience you have that is pertinent to the job you are applying for.

A resume is not a biography. Be selective, not exhaustive. Focus on experience that is related to the job you are applying for.

Arrange the descriptions of your accomplishments in a way that will focus the reader on how well you match the vacancy requirements.

According to the Office of Personnel Management, here is what your Federal resume **MUST** contain (in addition to specific information requested in the job vacancy announcement):

Job Information:

- Announcement number, and title and grade(s) of the job you are applying for.

Personal Information:

- Full name, mailing address (with ZIP Code) and day and evening phone numbers (with area code)
- Social Security Number
- County of citizenship (Most Federal jobs require United States citizenship.)
- Veterans' preference (if any)
- Reinstatement eligibility (If requested, attach SF 50 proof of you career or career-conditional status.)
- Highest Federal civilian grade held (Also give job series and dates held)

Education:

- High School
Name, city and State (ZIP code if known)
Date of Diploma or GED
- Colleges or universities
Name, city and State (ZIP if known)
Majors
Types and year of any degrees received
(If no degree, show total credits earned and indicate whether semester or quarter hours.)
- Send a copy of your college transcript only if the job vacancy announcement requests it.

Work Experience:

- Giving the following information for your paid and non-paid work experience related to the job you are applying for. (Do not send job descriptions.)

Job title (include series and grade if Federal job.)

Duties and accomplishments

Employer's name and address

Supervisor's name and phone number

Starting and ending dates (month and year)

Hours per week

Salary

- Indicate if we may contact your current supervisor.

Other Qualifications:

- Job-related training courses (title and year)
- Job-related skills, for example, other languages, computer software/hardware, tools, machinery, typing speed
- Job-related certificates and licenses (current only)
- Job-related honors, awards, and special accomplishments, for example, publications, memberships in professional or honor societies, leadership activities, public speaking, and performance awards (Give dates but do not send documents unless requested.)

Optional Application Form for Federal Employment, OF-612

When the Office of Personnel Management announced in January, 1995 that the Standard Form 171- Application for Employment was no longer the sole federal application form, federal job seekers gained an opportunity to present information about their experience in new formats. One of these is OF- 1612, Optional Application for Federal Employment.

The General Information provided by OPM concerning OF-612 states in part:

“You may apply for most Federal Jobs with a resume, the ... Optional Application for Federal Employment or other written format . If your resume or application does not provide all the information requested on this form and in the job vacancy announcement, you may lose consideration for a job. Type or print clearly in dark ink. Help speed the selection process by keeping your application brief and sending only the

requested information. If essential to attach additional pages, include your name and Social Security Number on each page.”

Strategies for Writing a Qualifying Federal Application Package

You may apply for federal jobs with a SF-171, an OF-612, or a Federal Resume.

First, READ the entire vacancy announcement carefully to make sure your experience and/or education meets the basic qualification requirements and selection factors. This will be spelled out in terms of quantity (number of years) as well as quality (type) of experience.

Next, WRITE a response that addresses both these requirements explaining how you meet the criteria. Qualifying experience can either be paid or unpaid (i.e., volunteer).

Then, WRITE a response to all ranking factors ensuring that each is addressed completely, worded properly and easily understood. Include training that relates to each ranking factor.

DO NOT use abbreviations or acronyms. Spell the name in its entirety and then use abbreviation in parentheses. Example: Department of State (DOS).

Use the 3 Cs of good writing” when writing your experience blocks.

CLEAR - is easily understood and free from confusion.

COMPLETE - provides detailed evidence of your skill, knowledge, and/or accomplishment. Quantify and qualify your experience. Explain the result and how it was implemented.

CONCISE - is brief and to the point.

DO NOT ADD attachments to your application unless they are specifically requested. You may refer to letters of commendation and quote from them where appropriate.

DESCRIBE general experiences gained more than 10 years ago if pertinent. Do not include any experience older than 10 years that does not pertain to the position for which you are applying.

Experience Block Format

Start with a brief narrative that explains the scope of your responsibilities. Next, cite your award(s) earned during this time period and explain what you accomplished to earn the award(s).

The body of your experience blocks should be a series of “bullet” entries which are concrete examples of your duties and accomplishments. Start with an action verb and describe your most important accomplishments. It is important to give evidence of your skill and knowledge.

Near the end of each experience block provide a skill summary, that highlights your special skills, a list of your awards, and training you completed during this time period.

Format Example:

Scope of Responsibility

- As Management Analyst in the of office of _____
- Received Cash Awards 1996, 1995 and 1994 for OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE as a result of my work on _____

Duties and Accomplishments

- Managed _____ (Accomplishment with results stated).
- Coordinated _____
- Organized _____
- Planned and evaluated _____
- Developed and gave eight briefings per month to _____

Skill Summary

- Knowledge of _____
- Experience with _____
- Ability to _____
- Able to _____

Honors and Awards

Training

Six Steps to Strong Accomplishment Statements

The following steps will help you to develop your action statements that give evidence of your accomplishments. Select skills necessary for the position you are applying.

Step 1

STATE THE PROBLEM, NEED OR CHALLENGE

Provide secretarial support, write letters, memos, reports as needed.

Chaotic and inadequate log book; documents that are needed are difficult to identify and retrieve.

Step 2

IDENTIFY A SKILL

Write letter and memoranda

Organize and create files

Step 3

CITE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW YOU USED THIS SKILL

For three years wrote letters and memoranda for office director's signature.

Set up new files for Eastern European reports.

Step 4

DESCRIBE THE CIRCUMSTANCES - Who, What, Where, When, Why, How

Independently researched and drafted letters daily in response to Congressional inquiries, requests for information from companies and the public, and Red Borders for the Seventh Floor principals.

From log books, created a new filing system and data base of documents that staff members could use to file and retrieve timely documents.

Step 5

REINFORCE WITH MEASURABLE DATA- Numbers, Dollars, Percentages, Volumes per Month, year, etc.

Wrote 20-25 responses to Congressional inquiries per week during a 6-month period; wrote 25-30 responses to public inquiries per month; wrote 3-6 Red Borders per week during crises, ensuring that all were grammatically correct and in compliance with correspondence regulations. Created a 450-item data base with summaries.

Step 6

GIVE THE RESULTS. WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED BECAUSE OF YOUR USE OF THIS SKILL?

Productivity, morale, customer service, problem solving, money saved, etc.

Handled the correspondence previously done by two secretaries, and reduced turnaround time significantly. Received cash award for outstanding performance.

Ten-member staff and five Foreign Service Officers commented that the new system is much more efficient and user-friendly. Received Cash Award for Creating a new Standard Operating Procedure.

Describing Your Accomplishments

Describe your accomplishments with strong verbs. The following list may be helpful:

accomplished	coordinated	implemented	programmed
achieved	corrected	improved	prohibited
acquired	counseled	initiated	projected
adjusted	critiqued	inspected	promoted
administered	dealt	instructed	purchased
advised	decided	insured	qualified
analyzed	defined	interpreted	rated
applied	delegated	interviewed	recommended
appraised	delivered	introduced	related
arranged	demonstrated	investigated	reported
assessed	designed	joined	researched
assisted	determined	kept	reviewed
assured	developed	led	revised
bought	devised	licensed	selected
briefed	directed	maintained	set

brought	drafted	managed	solved
budgeted	edited	modified	sought
cataloged	enlisted	monitored	specified
changed	ensured	named	spoke
chaired	established	negotiated	studied
classified	estimated	observed	suggested
closed	evaluated	ordered	summarized
communicated	expanded	organized	supervised
compared	expedited	participated	targeted
completed	explained	perceived	taught
conceived	financed	performed	tested
concluded	forecast	persuaded	trained
conducted	formulated	planned	translated
continued	gathered	prepared	treated
contracted	graded	presented	updated
controlled	guided	processed	wrote
	handled		

You need not limit yourself to the verbs on this list. The vacancy announcement may help you identify verbs to use.